

## Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-01 INR-07 L-03  
NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 USIA-06 SAJ-01  
TRSE-00 /059 W

-----241222Z 119117 /14

R 231146Z DEC 76  
FM AMEMBASSY MADRID  
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 8411  
INFO AMEMBASSY LISBON

C O N F I D E N T I A L MADRID 9616

E.O. 11652: GDS  
TAGS: PINT, SP  
SUBJ: PROVINCIAL VOTE COMPARISON SHOWS SUBSTANTIAL NATIONAL  
CONSISTENCY

1. PROVINCE-BY-PROVINCE COMPARISON OF VOTING FIGURES (STILL INCOMPLETE FOR A FEW PROVINCES) SHOWS SUBSTANTIAL NATIONAL CONSISTENCY. MOST CONSISTENT WAS THE "YES" VOTE AS A PERCENTAGE OF VOTES CAST, IN WHICH ONLY ONE PROVINCE, SANTANDER (WITH A HIGH 'NO' VOTE) REGISTERED MORE THAN THREE PERCENTAGE POINTS AWAY FROM THE NATIONAL AVERAGE OF 94.2. FOR THE RECORD, THE HIGHEST "YES" VOTES CAME MOSTLY FROM THE SOUTHERN HALF OF THE COUNTRY--THE SOUTHERN LEVANT, ANDALUSIA, EXTREMADURA, AND THE CANARIES--BUT IN ANY CASE THE MARGINS (AS NOTED, LESS THAN THREE PERCENTAGE POINTS IN THE 90-PLUS RANGE) ARE TOO SMALL TO HAVE MUCH SIGNIFICANCE.

2. THE GREATEST VARIATION CAME IN THE PARTICIPATION FIGURES, WHERE FOR OBVIOUS REASONS, THE TROUBLED BASQUE PROVINCES OF GUIPUZOCA (44.9 PERCENT) AND VIZCAYA (53.1) HAD THE LOWEST PARTICIPATION BY A LARGE MARGIN.

-- THE OTHER BASQUE PROVINCES, ALAVA AND NAVARRA, PARTICIPATED AT A RATE ONLY  
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SLIGHTLY BELOW THE NATIONAL AVERAGE OF 77.4  
(76.3 AND 73.6 RESPECTIVELY).

-- BARCELONA'S RELATIVELY LOW PARTICIPATION  
RATE (72.3) WE JUDGE TO REFLECT A MIXTURE  
OF REGIONAL AND IDEOLOGICAL SENTIMENT: INTER-

ESTINGLY, THE OTHER CATALAN PROVINCES PARTICIPATED AT ABOVE THE NATIONAL AVERAGE.

3. GALICIA'S FOUR PROVINCES ALSO PARTICIPATED LESS THAN THE NATION OVERALL (RANGING FROM 63.6 TO 71.5), A SENSE OF SEPARATE CULTURAL IDENTITY PROBABLY FIGURES SOMEWHAT IN THIS PERFORMANCE, BUT IT SEEMS LARGELY TO REFLECT THE AREA'S NOTORIOUSLY BAD WEATHER, DIFFICULTY OF TRANSPORTATION, AND SCATTERED RURAL POPULATION BECAUSE:

-- IN GALICIA THE "NO" AND BLANK VOTES SHOW NO MEANINGFUL VARIATION FROM THE NATIONAL NORMS (AS ONE AND/OR THE OTHER DOES IN THE TWO BASQUE PROVINCES AND IN BARCELONA).

-- THE LOWEST PARTICIPATION IN THE REGION CAME IN ORENSE, THE LEAST DEVELOPED OF THE FOUR.

4. THE OTHER TWO PROVINCES PARTICIPATING AT BELOW THE NATIONAL AVERAGE WERE SUI GENERIS CASES:

-- TRADITIONALLY INDEPENDENT, CONFLICTIVE OVIEDO (ASTURIAS) IN WHICH THE RATE (71.8) WAS SOMEWHAT BELOW THE NATIONAL NORM AND WHICH ALSO HAD A SOMEWHAT HIGHER NO VOTE.

-- SANTA CRUZ DE TENERIFE, WHOSE LOW PARTICIPATION RATE (67.6) CONTRASTED WITH THE MUCH-HIGHER-THAN-AVERAGE RATE OF ITS SISTER PROVINCE OF THE CANARIES (LAS PALMAS, CONFIDENTIAL

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83.4) AND HAS BROUGHT NO SOLID EXPLANATION FROM OBSERVERS HERE.

5. THE "NO" VOTES SHOWED A SUGGESTION OF CONSERVATISM IN THE COUNTRY'S CENTRAL PROVINCES (CASTILE), PLUS SOME SUI GENERIS CASES.

-- SANTANDER HAD THE NATION'S HIGHEST "NO" VOTE, 6.6. WE TENTATIVELY ASCRIBE THIS TO THE PROVINCE'S CONDITION AS A REMOTE OUTPOST OF CASTILE AND A LONG-STANDING RIVAL OF NEIGHBORING, BASQUE VIZCAYA, A CONDITION WHICH HAS LED TO A HARDENING OF EXTREME POSITIONS.

-- VIZCAYA ALSO HAD A SLIGHTLY HIGHER THAN AVERAGE "NO" VOTE, PROBABLY FROM ITS WELL-FIXED BUSINESS COMMUNITY AND STEMMING FROM

POLARIZATION IN THAT CONFLICT-RIDDEN PROVINCE.

-- TOLEDO HAD THE SECOND-HIGHEST "NO" VOTE IN THE COUNTRY, 6.0, BUT WE NOTE THAT IN THE CASE OF THE SMALL TOLEDO TOWN REPORTING A "NO" VOTE OF 52 PERCENT, THE ONLY SUCH MAJORITY IN THE COUNTRY, PROTESTS AND DEMONSTRATIONS CLAIMING FRAUD BY THE RIGHT (NOT RPT NOT THE GOVERNMENT) HAVE BEEN GOING ON SINCE THE VOTE WAS ANNOUNCED. ON THE OTHER HAND, SIX OF THE SEVEN OTHER PROVINCES WITH "NO" VOTES OVER 3 PERCENT (AS COMPARED WITH THE NATIONAL AVERAGE OF 2.6) ARE, LIKE TOLEDO, IN THE COUNTRY'S CENTER: MADRID, VALLADOLID, BURGOS, PALENCIA, CUENCA, AND CIUDAD REAL.

7. THE BLANK RATES (ALL LOW) FOLLOWED A PATTERN SIMILAR, BUT NOT IDENTICAL, TO THE ABSTENTION RATES:  
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-- THE HIGHEST CAME IN GUIPOZCOA (5.4) FOLLOWED BY VIZCAYA AND ALAVA (5.1 EACH) THE FOURTH BASQUE PROVINCE, NAVARRAN WAS ALSO ABOVE THE NATIONAL AVERAGE WITH 4.0 PRESUMABLY THE BLANK VOTE GENERALLY REFLECTS THOSE WHO WERE BASICALLY PRO-ABSTENTION BUT EITHER FEARED RETALIATION OF SOME SORT (IT SEEMS CLEAR THAT A FEW SPANIARDS EITHER NEVER LEARNED OR NEVER BELIEVED THAT THEY REALLY DID NOT HAVE TO VOTE IN THIS REFERENDUM), OR WANTED THE TIME OFF FROM WORK BUT NEEDED TO PROVE THEY HAD VOTED.

-- BARCELONA, ALSO WITH A HIGH BLANK VOTE (4.6) AND ALSO AN INDUSTRIALIZED AREA WITH A HIGH ABSTENTION RATE, MERITS SIMILAR ANALYSIS.

8. IN SUM, BROAD PATTERNS ARE DISCERNIBLE, SHOWING ESPECIALLY BASQUE AND (TO A LESSER DEGREE) CATALAN AUTONOMIST SENTIMENT, AND A HINT OF THE CONSERVATISM IN THE COUNTRY'S CENTER. ALSO INTERESTING IS THE CORRELATION OF "NO" AND/OR BLANK VOTES WITH ABSTENTION IN THE BASQUE AND NORTH PROVINCES AND BARCELONA, REFLECTING POLARIZATION IN THE MORE ISSUE-RIDDEN AREAS. THE ONLY LARGE AND IMMEDIATELY MEANINGFUL VARIANT, HOWEVER, WAS HIGH ABSTENTION IN THE TWO HARD-CORE BASQUE PROVINCES. IN VIEW OF THE OFT-COMMENTED DIVERSITY OF THE COUNTRY, THE OVERALL CONSISTENCY WAS REMARKABLE. STABLER

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## Message Attributes

**Automatic Decaptioning:** X  
**Capture Date:** 01 JAN 1994  
**Channel Indicators:** n/a  
**Current Classification:** UNCLASSIFIED  
**Concepts:** REPORTS, ELECTION RESULTS, PROVINCIAL ELECTIONS  
**Control Number:** n/a  
**Copy:** SINGLE  
**Draft Date:** 23 DEC 1976  
**Decaption Date:** 01 JAN 1960  
**Decaption Note:**  
**Disposition Action:** RELEASED  
**Disposition Approved on Date:**  
**Disposition Authority:** CunninFX  
**Disposition Case Number:** n/a  
**Disposition Comment:** 25 YEAR REVIEW  
**Disposition Date:** 28 MAY 2004  
**Disposition Event:**  
**Disposition History:** n/a  
**Disposition Reason:**  
**Disposition Remarks:**  
**Document Number:** 1976MADRID09616  
**Document Source:** CORE  
**Document Unique ID:** 00  
**Drafter:** n/a  
**Enclosure:** n/a  
**Executive Order:** GS  
**Errors:** N/A  
**Film Number:** D760472-0434  
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**Image Path:**  
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**Legacy Key:** link1976/newtext/t19761217/aaaaaov.tel  
**Line Count:** 168  
**Locator:** TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM  
**Office:** ACTION EUR  
**Original Classification:** CONFIDENTIAL  
**Original Handling Restrictions:** n/a  
**Original Previous Classification:** n/a  
**Original Previous Handling Restrictions:** n/a  
**Page Count:** 4  
**Previous Channel Indicators:** n/a  
**Previous Classification:** CONFIDENTIAL  
**Previous Handling Restrictions:** n/a  
**Reference:** n/a  
**Review Action:** RELEASED, APPROVED  
**Review Authority:** CunninFX  
**Review Comment:** n/a  
**Review Content Flags:**  
**Review Date:** 05 MAY 2004  
**Review Event:**  
**Review Exemptions:** n/a  
**Review History:** RELEASED <05 MAY 2004 by BoyleJA>; APPROVED <30 AUG 2004 by CunninFX>  
**Review Markings:**

Margaret P. Grafeld  
Declassified/Released  
US Department of State  
EO Systematic Review  
04 MAY 2006

**Review Media Identifier:**  
**Review Referrals:** n/a  
**Review Release Date:** n/a  
**Review Release Event:** n/a  
**Review Transfer Date:**  
**Review Withdrawn Fields:** n/a  
**Secure:** OPEN  
**Status:** NATIVE  
**Subject:** PROVINCIAL VOTE COMPARISON SHOWS SUBSTANTIAL NATIONAL CONSISTENCY  
**TAGS:** PINT, SP  
**To:** STATE  
**Type:** TE  
**Markings:** Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 04 MAY 2006